



Maricopa County

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Maricopa County Confirms First West Nile Virus Human Cases and Positive Mosquitoes

PHOENIX (July 27, 2006) – Maricopa County's 2006 West Nile virus season is beginning with quite a buzz. Today, Maricopa County Department of Public Health and Arizona Department of Health Services confirmed three cases of West Nile virus (WNV) and one infection in a blood donor.

The cases, a 53 year old male, a 47 year old female and a 74 year old male are all recovering from the virus.

"Our first cases are a constant reminder that West Nile virus can affect anyone from anywhere in the Valley," said Dr. Bob England, acting director of Maricopa County Department of Public Health.

WNV infection also was found in a woman giving blood at a West Valley blood donation site.

"This is the precise reason why blood donation sites test for West Nile virus," said Dr. England. "This blood donor had no symptoms of the virus, but because of testing, the blood collection agency was able to make sure her blood was not inadvertently given to someone else."

In addition to the first human cases detected with WNV this year, positive mosquito samples have been confirmed by Maricopa County Environmental Services in the town of Gilbert and the areas of Laveen and Waddell.

"Through our routine surveillance of collecting and testing mosquitoes throughout the Valley, we found these West Nile virus positive mosquito samples," said John Power, interim director of Maricopa County Department of Environmental Services. "It is also very important that residents work with their neighbors to prevent mosquito breeding and that they report to our department any mosquito problems, green pools or standing water to help us minimize the risks of West Nile virus."

"The evidence tells us that West Nile virus is popping up its ugly head in Arizona again," said David Engelthaler, state epidemiologist for the Arizona Department of Health Services. "With the heat and the recent rains, the stage is set to start seeing more and more human cases this summer, so we all need to be taking precautions," said Engelthaler.

WNV is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. Approximately 20 percent of

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people infected with the virus will feel flu-like symptoms occurring three to 15 days after the mosquito bite.

Symptoms may include fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting, swollen lymph glands, and skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. A small percentage of people who are infected with WNV will experience severe symptoms such as meningitis, encephalitis, paralysis and even death. Persons over the age of 50 are generally at a higher risk for severe symptoms. If a person thinks he or she has WNV symptoms, he or she should consult their health care provider.

These are the first laboratory-confirmation of human cases of West Nile virus infection in Maricopa County this year. Last year, Maricopa County reported 79 confirmed West Nile virus cases, and 4 deaths.

The Arizona Department of Health reports mosquito activity in seven Arizona counties, including Maricopa.

Residents are encouraged to mosquito proof their home:

- Eliminate mosquito-breeding sites around your property. Drain standing water in potted plants, tires and other containers.
- Install or repair window and door screens to keep mosquitoes out of the home.
- Keep fountains, animal troughs and swimming pools properly operating and free from debris.

Eliminating stagnant water around your property will stop mosquitoes from breeding. However, it is very important to avoid all mosquito bites. Apply insect repellent as directed by the product's directions, wear long clothing, and avoid outdoor activity after dusk and before dawn when mosquitoes are most active.

Maricopa County and the Arizona Department of Health Services continue to have an enhanced surveillance program which includes sampling and testing of mosquitoes and dead birds, and evaluation of equine neurological illnesses and human cases of meningitis and encephalitis.

For more information on West Nile virus, public health assistance, as well as for WNV dead bird drop-off locations, to report green pools or file any mosquito related complaint, and for WNV materials or presentations for your group/organization, call (602) 506-0700 or visit www.maricopa.gov/wnv.

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